

NORTH DAKOTA ERIONITE QUESTION AND ANSWER SHEET

March, 2009



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH



This information sheet is meant to provide answers to questions people may have in regards to the North Dakota erionite medical health study.

Question: Why is this research being done?

Answer: The purpose of this medical study is to try to get an indication of whether health problems related to erionite exposure in the western parts of North Dakota are observed.

Question: What is erionite?

Answer: Erionite is a fibrous mineral with some properties similar to asbestos, but is not regulated as a form of asbestos fiber.

Question: Why is erionite a concern?

Answer: Like asbestos, erionite may pose health risks to those who breathe in the fibers for long periods of time. Exposure appears to be associated with increased risk of fibrogenic lung disease (a condition in which mineral dusts cause thickening or scarring of lung tissue), lung cancer and mesothelioma (a rare type of respiratory cancer usually related to asbestos exposure). According to the World Health Organization, International Agency for Research on Cancer, erionite is a known human carcinogen and has been associated with numerous health effects and deaths in Turkey.

Question: Who is conducting the research?

Answer: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and North Dakota Department of Health have contracted with the University of Cincinnati to implement the study.

Question: Who can volunteer for the study?

Answer: Health related problems from exposure to erionite can depend on how much erionite a person is exposed to and for how long. This study is targeted toward individuals that have worked in high erionite exposed environments such as road maintenance crews, professional drivers (e.g., mailman, school bus driver, delivery drivers), gravel pit workers and possibly other professions exposed to erionite containing gravel.

Question: How will participants be selected?

Answer: Participants will be selected based on a number of criteria, including employment history, job responsibilities, exposure time, medical history and other variables.

Question: What would a participant be expected to do?

Answer: All participants will need to

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complete a questionnaire over the phone regarding your occupational and medical history, and information on other exposures you may have experienced, as well as be available for a chest x-ray and high-resolution computed tomography (HRCT) scan, both of which will be paid for by the study.

Question: Are there any risks from participating in the medical testing?

Answer: The risk associated with participation in this study is minimal. Chest radiographs and HRCT are routine tests used to identify abnormalities within the chest and lung associated with exposure to asbestos and asbestos-like fibers.

Question: Does it cost to volunteer for the study?

Answer: No.

Question: If I participate, will my information be kept confidential?

Answer: Yes. The data from the study may be published; however, no names will be identified. Only those individuals directly involved in the implementation of this study will have access to gathered information.

Question: How long will the study take?

Answer: Completion of all parts of the study should take no more than 4 hours. You will be in the research study for approximately one to three months depending upon when you decide to complete all parts of the study.

Question: If I participate in the study and am found to have health problems related to erionite exposure, what happens then?

Answer: Individual results will be shared with the participants, but it will be the

participant's responsibility to further discuss the results and any future medical needs with their own health care provider.

Question: How can a person protect themselves from possible exposure to erionite?

Answer: The extent of the erionite exposure in western North Dakota is unknown, but given the toxic nature of the material, reducing exposure is recommended. Recommendations for county highway departments, businesses and private landowners include finding alternative sources of gravel and limiting or eliminating exposure to erionite fibers.

Question: When will the study begin?

Answer: The initial screening questionnaire is expected to be available in March, 2009.

For more information regarding erionite in North Dakota, please contact either:

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